

# Getting here and advice about your stay

## Overview

Around 20,000 British nationals live in Qatar, and approximately 130,000 visit annually. Most visits are trouble-free.

On 4th June 2017, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic ties with Qatar. This has led to closures affecting road, air and sea routes between these countries and Qatar, as well as travel and residence restrictions affecting Qatari nationals. Restrictions on entry to the UAE have also been placed on certain holders of Qatari Residence Permits. These restrictions do not apply to British nationals.

On 6th June 2017, the land border between Qatar and Saudi Arabia closed. All flights between Qatar and Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and Bahrain are suspended until further notice.

These measures are likely to lead to some disruption for travellers in the region. You should check with your airline before you travel. Direct flights to and from the UK are not affected.

You can contact the emergency services in Qatar by calling 999 (police, fire and ambulance).

## Entry requirements

### **Passport validity**

You should have a full 'British Citizen' passport valid for a minimum period of six months from the date of entry into Qatar.

### **Visas**

You can get a free 30-day tourist visa-waiver on arrival in Qatar. If you hold another type of British passport, (see: <https://www.gov.uk/types-of-british-nationality/british-subject>) you must get a visa before you travel.

### **UK Emergency Travel Documents**

UK Emergency Travel Documents (ETDs) are not valid for entry into Qatar. However, ETDs are accepted for airside transit and exit from Qatar.

## Living and working in Qatar

Under Qatar sponsorship laws, an employee wishing to change from one sponsor to another must get a No Objection Certificate (NOC). A sponsor is not obliged to give an NOC to an employee. Without an NOC, an employee must leave Qatar at the end of their employment, and may not return to work in Qatar for two years.

If you are applying for a residence permit, you will have to undergo a medical test including blood tests and a chest X-ray. The tests screen for diseases including, but not restricted to, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis, Hepatitis B and C. Testing positive may lead to further tests and possible deportation.

## Medication

Some prescribed and over-the-counter medicines that are available in the UK may be considered controlled substances in Qatar. If you need to bring in controlled/prescription medication to Qatar, make sure you carry it in its original packaging, accompanied by your prescription and an official letter signed and stamped by your doctor stating the type of medication and why it is required.

## Health

Visit your health professional at least four-to-six weeks before your trip to check whether you need any vaccinations or other preventive measures.

Check the latest country-specific information and advice from the National Travel Health Network and Centre (NaTHNaC) on the TravelHealthPro website: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/countries> and by NHS (Scotland) on the FitForTravel website: <http://www.fitfortravel.nhs.uk/destinations.aspx>. Useful information and advice about healthcare abroad is also available on the NHS Choices website: <https://www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/healthcare-abroad/>.

Emergency medical treatment in Qatar is excellent but can be expensive. Routine treatment is available but expensive for visitors. Make sure you have adequate travel health insurance and accessible funds to cover the cost of any medical treatment abroad and repatriation.

If you need emergency medical assistance during your trip, dial 999 and ask for an ambulance. You should contact your insurance/medical assistance company promptly if you are referred to a medical facility for treatment.

## Local laws and customs

Local laws and customs reflect the fact that Qatar is an Islamic country. You should respect local traditions, customs, laws and religions at all times and be aware of your

actions to ensure that they do not offend other cultures or religious beliefs, especially during the holy month of Ramadan or if you intend to visit religious areas. There may be serious penalties for doing something that might not be illegal in the UK. You are strongly advised to familiarise yourself with and respect local laws and customs.

In 2019, the holy month of Ramadan is expected to start on 5th May and finish on 6th June. See a guide to travelling during Ramadan, at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/travelling-during-ramadan>.

Be aware of cultural sensitivities when filming or photographing people and religious, military or construction sites. Some visitors attempting to film or photograph in sensitive areas have been arrested. If in doubt, seek permission. If you are working as a journalist, you will need to get permission from the Qatar News Agency (QNA) to film or photograph as part of your work and enter the country on a visiting press permit. This permit will clear technical equipment like cameras through airport customs and provides other necessary information.

Importing drugs, alcohol, pornography, pork products and religious books and material into Qatar is illegal. All luggage is scanned at Doha Airport Arrivals Hall. DVDs and videos may be examined and censored. Penalties for drug offences are severe, often resulting in prison sentences.

It is an offence to drink alcohol or be drunk in public. Alcohol is available at licensed hotel restaurants and bars, and expatriates living in Qatar can obtain alcohol on a permit system. Do not carry alcohol around with you (except to take it on the day of collection from the warehouse to your home).

Qatar law also prohibits the importation, sale and purchase of electronic cigarettes, liquids and other similar products (e.g. electronic shisha pipes). The law applies regardless of quantity and intended use. Customs officials may seize and confiscate any such items found entering the country by any means, including in passengers' luggage or sent by post.

You should dress modestly when in public, including while driving. Women should cover their shoulders and avoid wearing short skirts. Any intimacy in public between men and women (including between teenagers) can lead to arrest.

Homosexual behaviour is illegal in Qatar. See the UK Government's information and advice page for the LGBT community at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/lesbian-gay-bisexual-and-transgender-foreign-travel-advice> before you travel.

Financial crimes, including fraud, bouncing cheques (including post-dated and 'security cheques') and non-payment of bills (including hotel bills) can often result in imprisonment and/or a fine in Qatar. Bank accounts and other assets may also be

frozen. You may also be liable for cheques that have been signed by you on behalf of a company.

If you have unpaid loans or financial commitments you will not be able finish your employment in Qatar and exit the country. Any debt will need to be settled in full before your residence permit will be cancelled and your exit permit issued.

*[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk (August 2018)]*

## Safety and security

### **Crime**

Although crime levels are low, female visitors should take extra care when travelling alone at night.

Only use registered taxis and do not enter a taxi late at night unaccompanied.

If you are a victim of sexual assault, you should contact the British Embassy Doha at: <https://www.gov.uk/world/organisations/british-embassy-doha> at the earliest opportunity. See: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rape-and-sexual-assault-abroad-returning-to-the-uk> for advice.

### **Road travel**

You can drive using a full and valid UK driving licence for up to 12 months from the date of your arrival in the country, as a visitor or a resident, without the need to undertake a driving test. After this, you will need to apply for a Qatari driving licence and sit both theory and practical tests. If you intend to drive using a UK licence in Qatar, you should obtain an International Driving Permit before travelling. See: <http://www.theaa.com/driving-advice/driving-abroad/idp>.

Road discipline is poor; speeds are high and minor accidents common. Qatar has a very high fatality rate for road accidents. If you have an accident, stay with your vehicle. It is an offence to leave the scene of the accident, but if no one has been injured and it is safe to do so, you can move your vehicle to a safer place. You will need to get a police report for insurance purposes.

The driver and front seat passenger should wear a seat belt at all times. You must not use a mobile phone while driving. Even minor expressions of 'road rage' like rude gestures can attract significant penalties. Offenders may be fined, imprisoned and/or deported. You may be banned from leaving the country until your case has been resolved. More serious cases may take up to six months to be heard.

Excursions to the desert can be hazardous unless in a properly equipped 4 x 4 vehicle. Always travel in convoy with other cars, take a supply of water and a mobile telephone, and leave travel plans with friends or relatives.

It is an offence in Qatar to drink and drive, and there is zero tolerance for it. Driving under the influence of alcohol is punishable by a custodial sentence of between one month and three years, a fine of QAR 10,000 (approx. £2,100) to QAR 50,000 (approx. £10,500), or both. Offenders may also be deported.

## **Sea travel**

Many areas of the Gulf are highly sensitive, including near maritime boundaries and the islands of Abu Musa and the Tunbs in the southern Gulf. Vessels entering these areas have been detained and inspected, and there have been occasional arrests. You should make careful enquiries before entering these waters or visiting ports.

Regional tensions may also affect your route. Vessels operating in the Gulf of Oman, Northern Arabian Sea, Gulf of Aden and Bab El Mandeb regions may be at increased risk of maritime attack.

Take care when travelling by Dhow, as the safety of these vessels may not be up to UK standards. Make sure life jackets are available.

## **Political situation**

Regional developments continue to have an impact on local public opinion in the region. You should be aware of local sensitivities on these issues. You should follow news reports and avoid public gatherings and demonstrations. There is the potential for increased tension on Fridays.

## **Terrorism**

Terrorists are likely to try to carry out attacks in Qatar. Attacks could be indiscriminate, including in places visited by foreigners.

Terrorists continue to issue statements threatening to carry out attacks in the Gulf Region. These include references to attacks on western interests, including residential compounds, military, oil, transport and aviation interests as well as crowded places, such as restaurants, hotels, beaches, shopping centres and mosques. You should maintain a high level of security awareness, particularly in public places. Avoid large gatherings and demonstrations.

There is a heightened threat of terrorist attack globally against UK interests and British nationals, from groups or individuals motivated by the conflict in Iraq and Syria. You should be vigilant at this time.

See the UK Government's advice about the global threat from terrorism, how to minimise your risk and what to do in the event of a terrorist attack, at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/reduce-your-risk-from-terrorism-while-abroad>.

Take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel. See the UK Government's advice page at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance>.  
FCO travel advice

If you are travelling to Qatar for business, the Foreign & Commonwealth Office (FCO) website has travel advice to help you prepare for your visit overseas and to stay safe and secure while you are there.

For up-to-the-minute advice please visit the FCO Travel section pages on the gov.uk website: <https://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/qatar>.

### **Travel insurance**

Take out comprehensive travel and medical insurance before you travel. See the FCO Foreign Travel Insurance guidance at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/foreign-travel-insurance>.

*[Source – FCO Travel Advice/gov.uk (August 2018)]*

Sponsored By:

### **Recruitment/Staffing Services**



### **Real Estate**



### **Accountants/Professional Business Services**



## Banking/Financial Services



## Hotels/Corporate Lodging



## Security/Risk Management Services



## Law



## Banking/Financial Services



## Market Entry Specialists



## Project Management Design/Engineering Consultancy Services

## **MULTIPLEX**

### **Investment Services/Regional Trade & Investment Services**



### **Shipping/Logistics Services/Port Operators**



### **Coworking Solutions/Office Solutions**



;

Contact IMA  
International Market Advisor  
IMA House  
41A Spring Gardens  
Buxton  
Derbyshire  
SK17 6BJ  
United Kingdom  
Email: [info@ima.uk.com](mailto:info@ima.uk.com)  
General enquiries switchboard: +44 (0) 1298 79562  
Website: [www.DoingBusinessGuide.co.uk](http://www.DoingBusinessGuide.co.uk)